

THE
EVIL and DANGER
OF
Lukewarmness
IN
RELIGION.

BEING

The First Part of the late Bishop of *LONDON*,
Dr. *Gibson's*, Fourth Pastoral Letter.

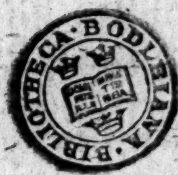
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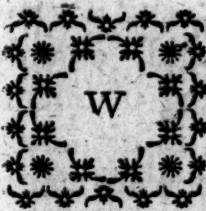
M DCC LXVII.





THE
EVIL and DANGER
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Lukewarmness in Religion.


 WHEN St. John * sets forth the State of Christianity in the Seven Churches of *Asia*, together with what was found in each that deserved to be approv'd, or condemn'd ; the Fault that he charges upon the *Laodiceans*, is *Lukewarmness*. And, by placing it between the two other States of † *Cold* and *Hot*, his Meaning plainly is, that though they were by no Means sufficiently careful and zealous in Religion, yet being not downright irreligious, they rested in that *Lukewarm* State, and were under no Concern to go on and proceed to further *Advances* in the Christian Life. Agreeably to this Description ; the *Lukewarmness*

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* Rev. iii. 15, 16.
neither Cold nor Hot, &c.

† Thou art LUKEWARM, and

ness in Religion, which is so commonly seen among Christians at this Day, is generally the Effect of a mistaken Persuasion, That if People go to Church as others do, and give the common Attention to the Business of their Stations, and keep themselves from Sins of a gross and notorious Nature, and are no way hurtful or injurious to their Neighbours; they are as good Christians as they need be. By these, they reckon their Salvation sufficiently provided for; without any Endeavour to grow better, and without examining their Hearts upon what Motives and Aims they act; "Whether the Evils they abstain from, and the Good they do, be owing to a Sense of Duty to God, and a View to a future Reward in the *next* World, or only to the Fear of Man, and the avoiding of Shame and Reproach in *this*: "Whether, in attending to the Business of their Station, they act under a Sense of Duty to God, who has plac'd them in it, or have no higher Motive or Aim, than the carrying on their *worldly* Views: "Whether they are, on all Occasions, as ready to *help* their Neighbours, as they are fearful to *hurt* them; and neither *covet* any Thing they enjoy, nor envy them the Enjoyment of it: "Whether they find any Degree of *Delight* in attending the publick Worship of God, and *endeavour* be orehand to put their Hearts into a proper Frame for Attention and Edification: "Whether they satisfy themselves, that they have a
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real *Relish* of Devotion, by praying in *Private* as well as in *Publick*: And, “ Whether at the same Time that they abstain from the Sins of a gross and more heinous Nature *themselves*, they shew a serious Dislike of them in *others*, and find an inward Concern at the Dishonour that is done to God and his Laws.

By these Tests, every one may judge of the Progress he has made in the Christian Life; and if he find none of those Things within him, but that he has hitherto contented himself with a bare bodily Attendance upon the publick Worship of God, and the following his daily Employment on other Days, and with abstaining from the more gross and notorious Acts of Sin, and from doing any Hurt or Injury to his Neighbour, and has rested finally upon these, as the *Whole* that Christianity requires of him; such an one is to conclude himself to be as yet in a very *imperfect* State, or, in other Words, in the Number of the *Lukewarm*. A State, that is the more dangerous to the Souls of Men, as it is usually accompanied with a Persuasion that they are as good as they need be, and, under that Persuasion, are not like to think of growing better. And there is the greater Danger of their being led to think too *favourably* of their Condition, in an Age which affords them so many Examples of *open* and *notorious* Wickedness of all Kinds, and of a *total* Neglect of the publick Worship of God; with whom they

are more willing to compare themselves (thanking God, that they are not *like other Men*) than with those about them, who have made a greater Proficiency in the Christian Life than they have done. Whereas, in Truth, neither the one nor the other ought to be the *Rule* of judging of our spiritual Condition. The only Rule of that Judgment is, the *Holy Scripture*; and especially, the *State* of Christianity, as laid down by Christ and his Apostles, and delivered to us in the Writings of the New Testament; in which the Life of a Christian, in every Part of it, is described in so plain and clear a Manner, that none who resolve to make it their *Rule* of judging, can possibly believe, that the lukewarm State, as described above, is that Measure of Goodness, which the Christian Religion requires.

And that Christians may no longer rest in that lukewarm State, but may see the Mistakes that have led them into it, and resolve to proceed forward to a State which is truly Religious; let the following Considerations be seriously attended to and laid to Heart.

C O N S I D E R,

1. *That a Personal Presence in the Church, without Attention and Devotion, is not an Act of Religion, nor such a Discharge of Duty as is at all pleasing to God. It is rather an Offence to him, and justly accounted an hypocritical Service, to*
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draw nigh to him with our Lips, when our Heart is far from him. On the contrary, the repairing to the Place of publick Worship out of a Sense of Duty, and joining seriously with the Congregation in the Prayers and Praises of the Church, and attending carefully to the Instructions which are there deliver'd, is not only the Performance of a Service acceptable to God, but moreover it imprints upon the Mind an habitual Sense of Religion; and this, the more lasting, if it be kept alive, as it ought to be, by the Practice of Devotion in *private*. And doubt not but a serious and regular Attendance upon the Ordinances of God, will be bless'd by him with such Supplies of Grace and Strength, as he sees needful for you; tho' you are not sensible at what Times, and in what Manner, they are convey'd.

2. *That the several Stations in Life, together with the Duties belonging to them, are to be considered as God's Appointment; and that a willing Acquiescence in the Station wherein his Providence hath placed you, and a diligent Attendance on the Duties belonging to it as appointed by him, is in the strictest Sense* THE SERVING OF GOD. This is what the Scripture means, when it directs the several Offices of Life to be performed, *Col. iii. 23. as to the Lord, and not unto Men.* If the Work be done only to please Men, or from a Fear of their Displeasure, no Service is done to God, nor any Reward to be expected from him. But, on the other hand, the doing it out of

Regard to God, and in a dutiful Compliance with his Appointment, is not only a great Support and Refreshment to the Mind under the most difficult and laborious Employments; but, which is of far greater Moment, it turns the most common Offices of Life into Acts of Religion. The Care that the * Gospel has taken, to inculcate the general Duty of *Diligence* in our Stations, and to acquaint us with the particular Duties belonging to the chief Relations in Life, of † Husband and Wife, of Parents and Children, of Masters and Servants; is a sufficient Intimation to us, how great a Part of the Christian Life consists in a regular and *conscientious* Discharge of those Duties. And how pleasing this is to God, we learn from St. Paul; who having particularly enumerated those Relations, with the Duties belonging to each, and commanded them to be done *heartily as to the Lord, and not unto Men*, immediately adds, (*Colos. iii. 24.*) *Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the Reward of the Inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ.*

3. *That one main Design of God, in annexing particular Duties to the various Stations in this Life, is to make Trial of our Obedience in order to another.* We are now in a State of *Probation*; and the great Proofs of our Obedience to God, are, * The pursuing the Business and Designs of this World

* 1 Theff. iv. 11. 2 Theff. iii. 11, 12. 1 Tim. v. 13.
† Ephes. v. 22, &c. Colos. iii. 18, &c.

World under a due *Subordination* to his Laws, and Submission to his Will; 'The enjoying the Blessings of Life, under a just Sense of the Hand from which they come, and of the much greater Blessings he has in Store for good Men in another World; and accordingly, 'The conducting all our worldly Affairs like those who are sensible, that it is God who has appointed us the Work, and that he will reward our diligent Attendance upon it. But when any one confines his Views to this World, and lives as if he had no Dependence upon God, nor regard to him in carrying on his Designs, and considers not the *Connection* there is between the Discharge of the Business of this Life, and our *Condition* in the next; we are not to wonder, that in such an one, the Sense of God and Religion wears off apace.

4. *That as this Life is a State of Probation, in which God is training us up for another; he expects from us Improvements in Goodness of all Kinds, and fresh Proofs of Obedience to him, in Proportion to the Time he allows us in this World, and the Opportunities he gives in the Course of it.* The want of considering this, is, without doubt, one great Cause of Lukewarmness in Religion. When Men think they are good enough already, they have no Concern but to keep themselves from growing worse; not being sensible of the *imperfect* State they are in, nor considering that there is no such thing as a *Stand* in Religion. If

they are not going *forward*, they are certainly going *backward*. And from hence arises the Duty of Self-Examination, and of comparing our Lives with the Rules of the Gospel, to let us see the Truth of our Condition, whether we are going backward or forward; and, by shewing us our Failings and Imperfections, to excite us to watch and pray against them, and to enter into Resolutions of better Improvement for the Time to come; a Work very proper at all Times, but more especially when we are to renew our Covenant with God in the Holy Sacrament.

5. *That there are Sins of Omission, as well as Sins of Commission.* It is not enough, that you do no Hurt or Injury to your Neighbour, unless you be ready to take all proper Opportunities of doing him *good*. It is not enough, that you refrain from casting unjust Censures upon him, unless you be ready to vindicate his good Name, when you hear him unjustly censured by others. It is not enough, that you refrain from doing Dishonour to God yourselves, unless you shew a becoming Zeal to discountenance it in others. It is not enough, that a Magistrate, Parent or Master, be regular in their own Lives, unless they exert the Authority which God has given them, to punish and restrain Irregularities in those, whom his Providence has put under their Power and Government. The *Commission of Sin* is in its Nature more daring,
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and usually attended with a greater Degree of Guilt, than the *Omission of Duty*. But since the *Duties of Life* are the Commands of the same God who forbids the Sins; it is strange to see, with what Indifference the *Omissions of Duty* are looked upon by lukewarm Christians, and how little Sense there is of the *Guilt* of forgetting and neglecting them.

6. *That the Rules and Measures of Duty must be taken from the Word of God, and not from the Opinions of the World.* For Instance; Anger, Malice, Envy, and other Qualities of the like Nature, pass among Men for little more than Frailties and Infirmities; but if you look into the New Testament, you will find them rank'd among * Sins of the most heinous Nature, and most inconsistent with the Profession of a Christian; and the contrary Duties of Love, and Meekness, and Forgiveness, recommended and insisted on, as necessary Parts of the Christian Life. Nor is it less dangerous to trust to the Opinion of the World, concerning the *Goodness* of your Actions; which depends not so much upon the outward Appearance, as upon the inward *Motives and Principles* upon which you act; and these can be known to none but God and your self. In either of these Cases, if you take your Estimate from the Opinion of the World, you run the Hazard of being greatly deceived; and may reckon your Condition very

* Ephes. iv. 31. Colos. iii. 8, 12. Gal. v. 22, 23.

very good, when you are at best in a very imperfect and lukewarm Way.

7. *That the evil Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart, when entertained, harboured, and approved there, have the same Guilt in the Account of God, as if they were carried into Execution.* He sees every Motion of the Heart, and judges of Men by the *Dispositions* and *Designs* he finds there. If there be first a *willing Mind*, he accepts and rewards *according to what a Man hath, and not according to what he hath not.* So, by the same Rule, if there be a *Mind willing to sin*, and only a *Want of Power or Opportunity to execute*, he condemns and punishes, as if it were actually committed.

8. *That the strictest Observance of one Branch of Duty, will not atone for the Neglect of another.* True Religion consists in a due Regard to every Branch of Duty, to be performed and attended in their *proper Seasons.* The Attendance upon the Business of Life will not excuse the Neglect of God's Worship; nor will the Attendance of God's Worship excuse the Neglect of the Business of Life. Much less will a Zeal in one Branch of Duty, which happens to be agreeable to our Inclinations, atone for a Neglect of other Branches to which our Natures are more averse. Every Branch of Duty is equally commanded by God, and all, as such, are equally binding; and our Obedience to him is chiefly shown in an Observance of those Duties to which
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corrupt Nature is averſe, and an Abſtinance from thoſe Sins to which it is inclined. And there is not a Miſtake that is either more dangerous or more abſurd, than to flatter one's ſelf, that the greateſt Diligence about ſome *Duties* which God has commanded, will atone for the Enjoyment of *Sins*, which he has as expreſſly forbidden.

You will obſerve without my telling you, that the Deſign of what I have hitherto written, has been, 'To ſhew Lukewarm Chriſtians how imperfect a State they are in, and wherein the Imperfections of it conſiſt: 'To point out to them the ſeveral Miſtakes about Religion and the Duties of it, which are apt to lead Men into that State, and confirm them in it: 'To ſatiſfy thoſe who are engaged in the Cares and Buſineſs of the World, that they can never want Opportunities to ſerve God, and approve themſelves to him, ſince a Religious State is ſo far from being inconfiſtent with the ordinary Employments of Life, that a great Part of Religion conſiſts in a *diligent* and *conſcientious* Attendance upon the Buſineſs of the Station in which Providence hath placed them: And, finally, 'To excite them, ſo far as their Station and Condition will fairly admit, to a ſerious Uſe of ſuch other Offices and Exerciſes of Religion, publick and private, as tend to their ſpiritual *Improvement*, and to carry them on from one Degree of Goodneſs to another.

AND

AND for their further Encouragement to give a due Attention to the Rules I have laid down agreeably to the Sense of Scripture; let them rest assured, that by entering upon the Course to which they are here directed, and pursuing it in earnest, they will remain no longer in the Number of the Lukewarm, but may safely consider themselves as true and sincere *Servants of God*. And if they persevere in that good Way, they may assuredly depend upon the Divine Assistance in this their Religious Course, and rely upon the Merits of Christ for the Pardon of all such Sins, Failings and Imperfections, as are, more or less, unavoidable in this mortal State: Not doubting, but that they shall be finally accepted and rewarded of God, according to the Degree and Measure of Goodness to which they have arrived in this Life.

THIS is a Progress in the Religious Life, and a solid Ground of Comfort both in Life and Death, which they may attain who are most engaged in the Affairs of this World, if they will pursue them under the Direction of Religious Principles, and under an habitual Sense of the Fear of God.

AND as for those, to whom God has given greater Degrees of Leisure from the Business of Life, to attend more frequently to Reading, Prayer, and other Exercises and Offices of Religion; they must remember, that he will expect from them greater *Improvements* in Purity and Goodness,

Goodness, suitable to the special *Advantages* and *Opportunities* which he bestow'd upon them.

THUS FAR we have treated of LUKEWARMNESS in Religion; and have shewn 'What it is, and wherein it consists, 'What are the proper Means of delivering ourselves out of that State, and, 'What are the proper Evidences of our being so delivered.

BUT tho' this is a considerable Progress in the Christian Life, and places us in the Number of *God's Servants*, while we persevere in the same good Course; yet we must always remember these two Things: The first, That as long as we continue in this frail mortal State, which is our State of *Trial* and *Exercise*, we are very liable to *relapse*, and to lose Ground, if there be not due Care, Watchfulness, and Resolution on our Part, to maintain it. And the second, That the only sure Preservative against relapsing into the State of Lukewarmness, is, a sincere Endeavour to be *growing* more and more in Goodness.

I. As to the Danger of Relapsing, and the Necessity of guarding against it; there needs no other Proof, than the Account which the Scripture and our own Experience give us of the general Frame and Condition of human Nature, and of the manifold Temptations with which we are encompassed: That, in our natural State, there is a great Proneness to Sin, and
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an Aversion to the Duties of Religion; our Desires carnal and corrupt, our Inclinations bent upon earthly Delights and Enjoyments, and our Hearts estrang'd from Heaven and heavenly Things: That, as our Desires are naturally bent upon the World; so the World meets and gratifies those inordinate Desires with a Variety of Enjoyment and Entertainments; wherein the Corruptions of our own Hearts, and the Examples of a wicked World, are combining, daily and hourly, to carry us to Excess: That our Adversary the Devil, a Spirit of great Cunning and Subtilty, and of implacable Enmity against God and Man, feeds our Imaginations, and heightens and inflames our inordinate Desires; and so manages all the Temptations, both within and without us, as they may best serve his own Purposes; which are, the drawing us from our Obedience to God, and making us Slaves to his own Dominion, and bringing us at last to that State of Torment and Misery, to which he and his wicked Spirits are already consigned. St. Paul speaks of the Devil (2 Cor. ii. 7.) as endeavouring by all Means possible to get *Advantages over us*; and he expresses the Art and Cunning of this Tempter, under the Name of *Wiles and Snares*, (2 Tim. ii. 25.) The Vehemence of his Assaults and Impressions, is described by him under the Similitude of *fiery Darts*, (Ephes. vi. 16.) and his Rage and Eagerness in the Destruction

struction of Souls, is compared by another Apostle, (1 Pet. v. 8.) *to a Lyon roaring after his Prey.*

FROM hence it appears, that the Condition of a Christian in this World, when rightly considered and understood, is not by any Means a State of Ease and Security, as too many Christians think and make it; but a State of great Danger and Difficulty. And therefore the most usual Similitude under which the Scripture represents the Life of a Christian, is that of a *Warfare*; as implying great Degrees, on one hand, of Danger and Difficulty, and on the other hand, of Watchfulness and Diligence, and Resolution. It speaks of a continual War within us, (Gal. v. 17.) *the Flesh lusting or striving against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh, and these two contrary, i. e. declared Enemies and Adversaries one to the other*; and it tells us elsewhere, (Ephes. vi. 12.) that the Warfare of a Christian is not only against Flesh and Blood, but that he must also fight and wrestle with Satan and his wicked Spirits; *against the Rulers of the Darkness of this World, against spiritual Wickedness in high Places.* And in the whole Course of this Warfare, that which the Scripture warns us against, above all other Things, is *Supineness and Security*; that we do not suffer ourselves to be *surprized* by our spiritual Enemy. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into Temptation,* is our Saviour's Lesson; who

who also has taught us, as oft as we pray for our daily Bread, to pray that we be not *led into Temptation, but delivered from the evil One*, i. e. the Devil.—*Be Sober, be Vigilant*, says St. Peter, 1 Epist. v. 8. *because your Adversary the Devil walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.* And St. Paul, 1 Cor. xvi. 13. *Watch ye, stand fast in the Faith, quit ye like Men, be strong:* And the same Apostle, Phil. ii. 12. *Work out your Salvation with Fear and Trembling*, with a perpetual Jealousy over yourselves, lest ye either grow slack and remiss in the Work, or leave it at any Time to be employed in the Works of Sin and Satan.

II. THIS is that habitual Care and Watchfulness which the Gospel recommends and enjoins to Christians, as necessary to secure their Innocence against all Temptations within and without, and to finish their Course with Safety and Success. And our Sincerity in pursuing and carrying on this necessary Work, will not only show itself in a conscientious Endeavour to refrain from the *outward* Acts of Sin, but it must also appear, 1. In Watching the *inward* Motions of the Heart, and all other Tendencies and Approaches toward Sin. Nor will it only appear in an habitual Endeavour to avoid Sin, and subdue the Motions to it; but 2. In a like Endeavour to be always *growing* in Goodness and Religion.

First,

First, AFTER Christians have deliver'd themselves out of a State of Lukewarmness, and are arriv'd to a settled Disposition and Desire to avoid Sin ; their Sincerity in the Work of their Salvation must further shew it self, in keeping a diligent Watch over their Hearts, and in labouring to restrain and suppress the inordinate Motions of them. We all of us make a solemn Promise to God at our Baptism, ' That we will renounce the Devil and all his Works, the vain Pomp and Glory of the World, with all covetous *Desires* of the same, and the carnal *Desires* of the Flesh, so that we will not *follow* nor be *led* by them.' And as it is the great Work of a Christian, while God continues him in this World, to make good that Promise, and thereby to keep himself in constant Covenant with God, so is it a Work that requires great Watchfulness and Application, abundantly enough to employ all the Zeal that human Nature is capable of exerting. The Devil, as he is a powerful and malicious Enemy ; so is he very subtil in the Management of his Temptations. At first, for Instance, the Consciences of Men are apt to startle at the Thoughts of very *great* Sins, and therefore he moulds and prepares their Hearts for those, either by offering Sins of a lesser Size which they will swallow, and so, by Degrees, *corrupting* and *hardening* their Consciences ; or else by Enjoyments, which seem to be innocent, and are so reputed in the World, but

but yet have a secret Tendency to particular Vices, and seldom fail to betray Men into them in the End. And since the Devil is thus cunning and subtil, it behoves us to beware diligently that we indulge not ourselves, either in Sins that in the Eyes of the World are accounted small and inconsiderable, which are always so many Steps and Preparations to greater; or in Diversions and Enjoyments, which, however innocent in themselves, we find, by our own Experience and Observation, are the Means of leading and betraying us into Sin. If Play, for Instance, tho' with Moderation, beget Anger and Oaths; if Company is apt to betray us into Excess; if Objects of any Kind raise in the Heart impure or inordinate Desires; our Zeal against Sin, must appear in avoiding all these tempting Occasions and Objects, upon the same Principle, that we would avoid the Sins themselves. Again, all Sin has its Birth in the Desires and Imaginations of Men; and if it be taken early, and opposed there, it may be easily stifled; but being suffered to rest in the Heart, and to work upon the Thoughts and Desires with any Degree of Pleasure and Delight, it gets head and is hardly to be resisted. And therefore our Zeal for the Preservation of our Innocence, must be shewn, in watching the first Entrance of such Desires and Imaginations into the Heart, and not suffering them to rest and harbour there, but immediately to drive them out. Add to this, that there is in every Man's Frame and Nature

Nature a stronger Disposition to some Sins and Vices, than to others; and every one's particular Calling, and Manner of Life, lays him open to some particular Temptations, as Injustice, Intemperance, and the like. Which Dispositions of Nature, and Misfortunes of Calling, a true Christian Zeal will mark out and observe; and, (seeing them to be their *weakest* Sides, where Sin and Satan are most like to enter) will guard them with a Care and Watchfulness proportionable to the Danger. Further yet; In this necessary Work, of opposing our inordinate Desires, and watching against Temptations, our Zeal too often cools and abates; and being diverted by the Business, or soften'd by the Diversions of the World, we are apt to grow slack and remiss in our spiritual Warfare; and therefore there is great Need to enliven our Zeal, and to nourish the Flame, by frequent Remembrances of our Danger, and by repeated Vows and Resolutions to hold fast our Innocence, and to continue stedfast unto the End.

THESE are the proper and necessary Expressions of a true Christian Zeal to subdue Sin, and to maintain our Innocence; and however *lukewarm* Christians may not be sensible of the Difficulty of this Work, because they never engage in it, never set themselves to observe or resist their inordinate Desires, but comply with them and give them their free Course; yet they, who are Christians in earnest, do not
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only find this a difficult Work, but a Work to which the Powers of Nature, in this corrupt State, are by no means equal ; and therefore, in a humble Sense of their own Weakness, they apply themselves daily to God in Prayer, that he will vouchsafe them a sufficient Measure of his Grace to assist and support them in the spiritual Combat, or, in the Words of the Apostle, (1 Cor. x. 13.) *That he will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the Temptation make a Way to escape, that they may be able to bear it.*

Secondly, AFTER Christians have in earnest renounc'd Sin, and by their own Endeavours and the Grace of God have fortified themselves against the Temptations to it ; that which must give them a full Proof of their *Sincerity* in the Work of their Salvation, and at the same Time an effectual Security against *Relapsing* ; is, an habitual Desire and Endeavour to be *growing* in Goodness and Religion. For this is one great End of subduing the Habits of Sin, To make way for the Habits of Goodness ; that when the Heart is in good Measure clear'd from the Roots of Wickedness, the Seeds of Piety and Religion may thrive and flourish in it ; or in other Words, that those Temptations which have hitherto had the greatest Power over us, losing their Strength, and growing every Day weaker, we may go on with greater Delight and Stedfastness in a daily Practice of the Christian Duties ; of Peace and Charity ; Patience, and

and Submission to the divine Will ; Meekness and Humility ; Temperance and Chastity ; and the like ; frequently examining our Hearts, to satisfy ourselves how the Christian Graces thrive there, and desiring above all things to see them still growing, and to be cultivating them diligently for that End, and improving them more and more into settled and confirmed Habits, as long as it shall please God to continue us in this World. For as the great Benefit of Life, is the Opportunity it gives Men, of approving themselves more and more to God by a Course of Obedience, and of growing to greater Degrees of Perfection in Goodness, in order to greater Degrees of Glory in the next World ; so it ought to be every Man's great Care, that Religion keep Pace with Life, and that his Growth and Improvement in Goodness bear some Proportion to the Time and Opportunity that God gives. And this Growth and Improvement, in Opposition to *Lukewarmness* in Religion, is not a *voluntary* Exercise of Zeal in this or that particular Person, but what is expressly required of every Christian, as a necessary Duty of the Christian Life. Beware, says St. Peter (2 Pet. iii. 17, 18.) *Beware, lest being led away with the Error of the Wicked, ye fall from your own Stedfastness ; but grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ : And St. Paul, (2 Cor. vii. 1.) Let us cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God.*

God. And it is this *Progress* in Religion, and our *Zeal* and *Activity* in it, that the same Apostle means, when he compares the Course of a Christian to a Race. *So run*, says he, that is, with such Speed and Quickness, *that ye may obtain*, and not fall short of Heaven, by Slowness in your Christian Course : And he tells us, (*Phil. iil. v. 12.*) that tho' he had not already attained to Perfection, (which no Man in this corrupt State ever can do) yet he *pressed towards the Mark*, he laboured to come as near as he could to the highest *Perfection* of the Christian Life, and that *for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus*.

AND what St. Paul did in this Case, every Christian ought to be daily doing ; that is, going on nearer and nearer to Perfection ; *giving all Diligence*, not only to grow in this or that particular Grace, but to be making an entire and uniform Progress and Improvement in *all* the Duties of the Christian Life : That so, they may be secure against relapsing into a sinful or lukewarm State, and in no Danger of being declared at the last Day, *barren and unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, as the Apostle speaks ; and, above all, That they may not fail of that exceeding great Reward, which God has promised to all those, who are thus careful to walk in his Ways, and to persevere therein unto the End.

F I N I S.

